

Applicants : John W. Carter et al.
Appln. No. : 10/660,834
Page : 2

REMARKS

In the present Office Action, claims 1-3, 6-15, 34-42, 44-47, 51, and 52 were rejected under 35 U.S.C. § 102(b) as being anticipated by U.S. Patent No. 6,441,943 B1 to Roberts et al.

Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection because it is improper. The present application is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent Application No. 10/228,525, which is a continuation of U.S. Patent Application No. 09/425,792, which is now the '943 patent, which is a continuation-in-part of U.S. Patent Application No. 09/311,955, which is now U.S. Patent No. 6,356,376. The present application also claims priority to U.S. Provisional Patent Application No. 60/410,088.

A continuing application is deemed to have been filed on the same date as the parent application, provided the claims are fully supported (i.e., disclosed) in the parent application. Because all of the features of claims 1-3, 6-15, 34-42, 44-47, 51, and 52 are disclosed in the '943 patent (by the Examiner's own admission), these claims are entitled to at least the same filing date as the '943 patent. Thus, the '943 patent cannot be relied upon by the Patent Office as prior art.

In the present Office Action, the Examiner also rejected claims 4, 5, 16-33, 43, and 48-50 under 35 U.S.C. § 103(a) as being unpatentable over the '943 patent, as applied to claim 1 above, and further in view of U.S. Patent No. 5,786,772.

For the same reasons discussed above, Applicants respectfully traverse this rejection because it is improper. Because the present application claims priority to the '792 application and is deemed to have been filed on the same date as the '792 application, which ultimately issued as the '943 patent, the '943 patent cannot serve as prior art to reject the present application.

Applicants respectfully submit that with the filing of this Reply, the application is now in condition for allowance. Applicants also respectfully submit that this Reply is fully responsive to the above-referenced Office Action.

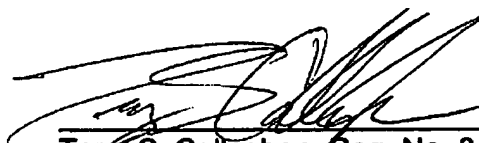
Applicants : John W. Carter et al.
Appln. No. : 10/660,834
Page : 3

CONCLUSION

If the Examiner has any questions or comments with respect to this Reply, the Examiner is invited to contact the undersigned at 616/949-9610.

Respectfully submitted,

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Date


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